



September 29, 2023

Kootenai National Forest
Attn: Over-snow Motorized Travel Plan
31374 US Highway 2
Libby, Montana 59923-3022

Submitted online at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=64358>

Dear Supervisor Benson,

Thank you for extending the comment period for the Kootenai Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Plan. Winter Wildlands Alliance submitted a letter on behalf of our members on August 21, 2023. However, we had additional members express an interest in signing this letter during the extended comment period. Therefore, I am resubmitting our letter, with the addition of these additional sign-ons.

As backcountry skiers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and all-around winter enthusiasts, we care deeply about winter recreation management on the Kootenai National Forest. We are further interested in this plan because of the important winter habitat that the Kootenai provides for wildlife such as Canada lynx, wolverine, fisher, and grizzly bears and the potential impact over-snow vehicle use can have on these species, as well as rare but important vegetation such as whitebark pine.

We appreciate that the Kootenai has already begun to consider how it will apply the minimization criteria as part of its analysis of designated OSV areas and routes. The screening questions you have developed are a good start, but please also include questions that address noise impacts and air pollution, as well as the potential for OSV incursions into adjacent non-motorized areas. These types of questions will help to better assess how each proposal may, or may not, lead to use conflict.

We support the Kootenai's proposal to not designate OSV use in recommended Wilderness, non-motorized backcountry areas, other areas closed in the Forest Plan, and along cross-country ski trails. There are additional areas that should not be designated for OSV due to the important habitat and connectivity they provide for wildlife. This includes the Galena, Barren, and Allen Peak inventoried roadless areas south of the Cabinet Wilderness. We also support the Kootenai's proposed season dates, which will help to ensure OSV use is limited to those times of year when there is sufficient snow, and when it will be least impactful to grizzly bears. Spring closures also help to protect natural soundscapes at a critical time for birds, which rely on their songs to communicate during the breeding season.



As you develop the Environmental Assessment, please also include a robust implementation, monitoring, and enforcement plan that will help the Kootenai National Forest ensure this plan achieves its intended goals once complete.

Thank you for considering these comments on behalf of the following Winter Wildlands Alliance members and supporters:

* denotes individual who was listed on August letter

Robert Ahrens *, Sheridan WY
Joel Anderson*, Whitefish MT
JL Angell, Rescue CA
Barbara Aronowitz*, Victor ID
Grant Barnard*, Red Lodge MT
Daniel Beesley*, Washington DC
Rob Bell*, Boulder CO
Mackenzie Berg*, Bellingham WA
Steve Berman, Berkeley CA
Megan Birzell*, Seattle WA
Karen Blackmore*, Littleton CO
Hillel Brandes*, Silver Spring MD
Thomas Chelstrom*, Boise ID
C. Clark*, Salt Lake City UT
Carol Collins*, Dover DE
George Corn*, Hamilton MT
Landon Crecelius*, Spokane WA
Cora Crecelius *, Sheridan WY
Diane Cross*, Billings MT
Alexey Davies , Boulder CO
Todd Davis*, Boise ID
Joanne Delmonico*, Portland OR
Shari DePauw*, Montrose CO
Gretchen DuBois*, Salt Lake City UT
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Melissa Early*, Ogden UT
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Sam Eurich, Bellevue ID
Liam Fitzgerald*, Sagle ID
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Joseph Howell *, Salt Lake City UT
Jessica Jern*, Wilson WY
Rick Kerr*, Choteau MT
Pete Knox, Meridian ID
Steve Kramer*, Boise ID
Matt Kuebler*, Yakima WA
Antoinette Laferriere*, Bend OR
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Richard Rusnak, Boise ID
John Saccardi*, Broomfield CO
William Sayres, Valleyford WA
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